

3 1761 11970201 7

Government
Publication

81-D-77

Canada. Statistics.
Recent trends of education in the
prairie provinces. 1932

81-D-77

DEPT. OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTOGovernment
PublicationsPublished by Authority of the Hon. H. H. Stevens, M.P.,
Minister of Trade and Commerce
DOMINION BUREAU OF STATISTICS

Dominion Statistician:	R. H. Coats, B.A., F.S.S. (Hon.), F.R.S.C.
Chief, Education Branch:	M. C. MacLean, M.A., F.S.S.
Assistant Chief, Education Statistics:	J. E. Robbins, M.A.

Recent Trends of Education in the Prairie Provinces 1932

The three prairie provinces all use the grading system that divides the school course into eight elementary and four secondary grades, the last of which always has been considered a post-graduate year, and the general equivalent of the first year of the university arts course. Only the larger secondary schools teach the twelfth grade, but each year it is more widely offered and educationists now generally feel that the time is not far distant when the universities will demand completion of it prior to admission. Three out of every four students now admitted to the University of Saskatchewan have completed the first year on entering. The proportion is similar in Alberta, but much lower in Manitoba, no doubt because the University of Manitoba is located in a large city from which it draws the majority of its students and where it is as convenient for the students to take their first year, or senior matriculation, at the university as at a collegiate. Attendance at the university may be preferred, in fact, on account of the school year being two months longer. Taking the three provinces as a unit the proportion of the total school enrolment in Grade XII in 1930 was two thirds as great as the proportion of the 1920 enrolment in Grade XI.

The greatly increased attendance in the twelfth grade is only one aspect of a general crowding into the secondary grades that has occurred. In a combined attendance of 539,013 in the three provinces in 1930 there were 60,891 or 11.3 per cent in the four upper grades. The percentage had almost doubled in ten years, having been only 6.3 percent in 1920. To produce this result children have been attending school more regularly. In 1920 the average daily attendance in the three provinces was 64.0 percent of the year's enrolment, in 1930 it was 76.5 percent. This means that the school boy of 1930 was spending 26 or 27 more days of the year in school than his older brother or sister did ten years before. Moreover, the median age of his school mates was about seven months more than that of his brother's so he could not expect to be finished with school until he was the greater part of a year older than his brother at time of leaving.

Crowding into the higher grades has been disproportionately severe in the smaller schools. In 1920 Saskatchewan's rural schools accounted for only 7.7 percent of the enrolment in high school grades, in 1930 for 20.9 percent. Alberta's one-room schools in 1920 cared for 8.9 percent only, in 1930 for 11.6 percent. The later figure would be higher but for Alberta's new rural high schools. The upward movement has been only less intense in urban centres, and in response the cities, practically without exception, have been obliged to find new secondary school accommodation. Under the stimulus provided by grants for technical education from the Dominion Government since 1919 the new schools have frequently been of a type to offer a wider variety of instruction. Winnipeg's junior high schools, of which there are now a dozen with three thousand pupils, date only from 1920. They offer a variety of shop-work and other pre-vocational classes. The new Provincial Institute of Technology and Art at Calgary opened in 1922. Commercial and household science courses at the high school level have become general in the larger centres of each of the provinces. In the last two years new technical schools have been opened at Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Brandon, Calgary and one for Edmonton planned. Between 1920 and 1930 the number in day technical classes in the three provinces multiplied almost three-fold to become 6,779, and those in evening classes almost doubled to become 7,066.

The cost of providing the additional accommodation has generally been a severe strain on municipal as well as provincial revenues, coming as it has, at a time when debenture payments still had to be made on new elementary schools erected to keep pace with the influx of population in the two decades preceding, and when public treasuries have found themselves pressed on all sides for money for numerous other new and expanding social services. Fifteen or twenty years ago heavy debts were freely assumed in erecting new schools. In some years more than half of all the money expended for school purposes was raised by contracting long term debts. Carrying the burden that accumulated in these earlier years, many school districts have been hesitant in the last decade about undertaking new obligations to provide the number and type of secondary schools felt to be desirable. The following table shows summarily the different aspect that financing of schools has assumed since 1913. Saskatchewan's nineteen Collegiate institutes and high schools are unavoidably omitted from the figures.

$\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{\partial L}{\partial \dot{x}} \right) = \frac{\partial L}{\partial x}$

Funds raised in support of schools.
(000's omitted)

		From Government Grants	From Local assessment	From debentures	Total, less short term notes
1913	Manitoba	352	2,198	987	4,054
	Saskatchewan	722	2,913	2,075	5,890
	Alberta	461	2,901	3,498	7,090
3 provinces	\$	1,535	8,012	6,560	17,034
	%	9.0	47.0	38.5	100.0
1930	Manitoba	1,286	7,822	466	10,588
1929	Saskatchewan	2,534	11,011	1,285	15,515
1929	Alberta	1,358	9,419	1,513	12,112
3 provinces	\$	5,178	28,252	3,279	38,682
	%	13.3	73.0	8.5	100.0

Except for a few miscellaneous sources such as fees from non-resident pupils, all money raised in support of the schools comes ultimately from two sources - the provincial treasury and local assessment, the latter mainly on real property. But in any single year large sums are temporarily raised by the sale of debentures payable some years later, and by bank loans payable a few weeks or months later. In comparing one year with another the latter can be left out of account, for borrowings and repayments in the course of a year generally come somewhere near balancing.

The foregoing table shows that in the three provinces collectively only 56.0 percent of school expenditure in 1913 was met by the taxes of the year while 38.5 percent was postponed. In Alberta alone less than half - 47.4 per cent to be exact - was actually met by the year's levies. By 1929 and 1930 the schools of the three provinces were raising by taxes 86.0 percent of all the money required, and postponing only 8.5 percent of their costs. They are now paying as they spend, thirty dollars per hundred more of their expenditure than they did before the war in spite of the fact that \$215 is now required by the schools for every \$100 that was spent at that time. Putting the two facts together they mean that \$350 is required in school taxes now where \$100 was in 1913. There has of course been an increase in population in the interval and a decline in the purchasing power of the dollar, but these two factors would have made \$212 now equivalent to \$100 in 1913. Since \$350 is being raised instead of \$212, it can be concluded that the per capita burden of school support is now 65 percent heavier than it was fifteen or twenty years ago.

It is particularly important that the data of the foregoing paragraph should be carefully noted, as a former publication of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics has shown that money was spent for schools in these provinces more generously in the pre-war years than recently, considering the smaller attendance of those years. In some quarters it was argued from this that the post-war taxpayer should be able to afford more for education. The confusion arises from inferring that expenditure and cost to the taxpayer in any year are one and the same. It is plain from the above figures that the pre-war population spent generously, but it is the post-war population that has been paying generously.

The source of the present payments, as between provincial and local treasuries, is practically the same now as it was in 1913. The provinces then paid 16.1 percent of the total paid by the two sources; in 1929 and 1930 they paid 15.4 percent.

Since the per capita school taxes of 1930 are two-thirds heavier than in 1913, one wonders whether the increase is justified by the increased work that the schools are now doing, or whether the present taxpayer is paying for more than he is receiving, as compared with his predecessors. With this in mind it is of interest to look at the following figures:-

	Total Cost of schools to taxpayer (000's omitted)	Cost of 1930 in 1913 dollars (000's omitted)	Cost per pupil in average daily attendance expressed in 1913 dollars	Actual cost per pupil in 1930	Actual cost of 1930 if grade distri- bution of 1913 existed
	1913 \$	1930 \$	1913 \$	1930 \$	
Manitoba	2,550	9,108	6,100	53.10	74.50
Saskatchewan	3,635	13,545	9,072	66.70	83.20
Alberta	3,362	10,777	7,218	73.30	82.70
3 provinces	9,547	33,430	22,790	64.30	80.60

The answer is that each pupil at school in 1930 cost the taxpayer ten percent less in terms of purchasing power than in 1913. The cost per pupil in the two years is reduced to a comparable basis by the use of the Bureau's index of wholesale prices, the comparable figures for the three provinces as a unit being \$64.30 in 1913 and \$57.90 in 1930.

Without attempting to compare the two years on the basis of a standard unit of purchasing power, the cost per pupil in 1930 appears much higher, \$85.10 where it was \$64.30 in 1913. If these figures were directly comparable, i.e. if a dollar now had the same value as before the war, there would still be other factors tending to account for the discrepancy. The cost of instructing a child in the high school grades is much more than in the elementary, and as noted above, the proportion in the more costly grades has greatly increased. If the low proportion of advanced students of 1913 had still existed in 1930 the cost of the average pupil in the later year would have been about \$80.60, or \$4.50 less than it actually was. Moreover, the school year has been continuously lengthened since 1913, especially in rural districts, until the schools are open on the average more than a month longer now than then. If the school year in 1930 had been only the same length as in 1913 the cost per pupil would have been reduced to \$67.85. Again, as is well known, there has been a continuous improvement in teachers' qualifications. If the teachers of 1930 had held the proportions of lower grade certificates that existed in 1913, but at the same time had received the average salaries paid to the holders of each class of certificate in 1930, the cost per pupil would have been reduced by \$4.50 more. That is, if the pre-war grade distribution, school year, and teacher classification had existed in 1930 the cost per pupil would have been \$63.35 (in the less valuable dollars) where it was \$64.30 in 1913. In the light of this and other comparisons that could be set forth, there seems little doubt that the present prairie province residents are getting good value from their schools. If educational costs are felt to be heavy the reason is not inefficiency in the schools, but that public general education is being offered to an unprecedented extent and level.

Twenty years ago the dominating problem of education in the prairie provinces was that of providing new schools and securing attendance at them of huge numbers of newly-arrived children of Continental European origin. The foregoing discussion of school costs suggests that this problem is well on the way to solution and that it has been largely superseded by the problem of providing facilities for advanced studies. The table hereunder, by comparing the grades of the fourteen-year-old children (i.e. what is generally the last year of compulsory attendance) in these provinces with those of the older provinces, shows definitely that this is the case.

Percentage of fourteen-year-old school children in the following grades in 1930.

	I - IV	V - VI	VII - VIII	IX - XII	I - XII
Alberta	4.3	21.3	54.1	19.5	100.0
Saskatchewan	7.2	23.6	47.5	21.7	100.0
Manitoba	7.0	23.1	50.9	19.0	100.0
Ontario	6.9	26.7	42.1	24.3	100.0
New Brunswick	11.6	25.8	46.0	16.6	100.0
Nova Scotia	9.8	27.3	43.2	19.7	100.0
P.E. Island	4.7	20.2	51.7	23.4	100.0
Three Prairie Provinces	6.4	22.7	50.6	20.3	100.0
Seven Provinces	7.2	25.3	45.3	22.2	100.0

At the age of fourteen only 6.4 percent of the children in the prairie provinces' schools have not got past the fourth grade, as compared with 7.2 percent for the average when the four older provinces are included. Where only 29.1 percent of the westerners have not gone farther than the sixth grade, 32.5 percent of the children in the seven provinces as a whole have not. This seems quite conclusive that the younger provinces are giving the elements of a general education at least as widely as the older, when considered in conjunction with the attendance laws in force in the different provinces. The figures above do not include, of course, children who have left school at fourteen. In Manitoba, for instance, they may leave when they have completed the eighth grade, regardless of age, whereas in Ontario they must have completed matriculation before age ceases to be a factor in school leaving. These two regulations have the effect of making the proportion of Manitoba's fourteen-year-olds in the high school grades low as compared with Ontario's. These and other considerations point to the conclusion that, if it were possible to include in the above table those who had left school at fourteen, the proportion with the elementary grades

leted in the prairie provinces would be more nearly equal to that in the older
vinces than it appears above.

To find the attainment of the average child on the prairies at school leaving
comparing so favourably with that of the children in eastern Canadian schools is
more noteworthy when it is remembered that the proportion in rural schools is
siderably higher, that the average rural child is probably more distant from any
ool, and almost certainly more distant from high school facilities. Some years ago
solidated school districts were widely organized - i.e. large districts formed,
ally by the amalgamation of several smaller districts, and conveyance provided to
entral school - to assist in solving the distance problem. Manitoba now has 108
h districts, Saskatchewan 42, Alberta 64, but there have been practically no
ditions for almost a decade. That these schools have been effective, and that they
st not more than the small one-room school in terms of work done, is shown in the
reau of Statistics' Annual Survey of Education in Canada for 1930.

A further type of school district amalgamation in rural areas with a view
greater equality of opportunity for children, and equality of cost to ratepayers
s more recently been widely discussed. It is the proposal to bring all the schools
a rural municipality under unified control, similar to the organization existing
rural Quebec and British Columbia, and in the city municipalities of all provinces.
til the present, however, only one municipality has been so organized. It is
niota in Manitoba, and its municipal school control dates from 1919. At the time
organization there were eleven schools and as many school boards in the municipality.
ree were consolidated, the others one-room schools. There are now one school board,
ur graded schools in which the full matriculation course is taught, and four ungraded
hools. A general superintendent is employed to visit all schools. The enrolment is
most 500, (only about one-eighth in the one-room schools) and conveyance is provided
or more than half of all pupils. The average daily attendance is 87.0 percent of the
enrolment, which compares with 77.0 percent in the province as a whole, including the
ities. The proportion of pupils in the high school grades is 17.4 percent where it
s 8.4 percent for the rest of the province outside of the cities. The Miniota pupils
attend school 181 days in the year on the average, where others in the province similarly
circumstanced (i.e. outside of the cities) attend 170 days. Such results as these
ndicate the possibility of wider adoption of the municipal school unit.



